

Subject: KAWADA! and TAUE! vs MISAWA! and KOBASHI! from 95- Match of the Decade?!?
ORIHARA! and YASURAOKA! rip it up in WAR! Phil tackles JWP THUNDERQUEEN BATTLE!
and other stuff to fascinate and entertain...

HOWDY~!

Welcome to DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #61!

Well now~! This is gonna be a fat-ass little post- in that as part of Participating in Lives of our Youths Program, I've outsourced some of the better tapes I haven't had a chance to watch yet over to Phil since I need to keep him off the streets and these babies need to be reviewed for those of you looking into adding to your hip International Wrestling Collection and wanna hear our humble slant. Phil's got good taste in the ladies and wrestling, so I'm STOKED that he has such a slackass job that he can help a fatboy out. Letsgetinon.

!@!@!@!@!@!@ ALL JAPAN- 6/9/95

Glenn, King of All That Is, was perplexed about this match. It's Toshiaki Kawada and Akira Taue against Mitsuhiro Misawa and Kenta Kobashi for the all the Tag belts and he was thinking this was possibly the match of decade. He requested that a couple of guys in and out of the nCo to take a look at it see if we would concur. Since Glenn is the ginchiest guy this side of ANY ocean, we were all more than happy to pipe in our views, so here's my humble opinion. This is one of the greatest- if not the greatest- matches of the decade. It's definately the tag match of the decade. It starts off right off the bat laying groundwork for key elements of psychology, BUT they do it in a non-All Japan way. Akira Taue kicks Kobashi in his wrapped up hamstring third or fourth move in and Kobashi makes the "I'm so VERY disappointed in you" look that makes ME want to jump in the ring and kick him the hamstring a few times. Kawada gets in, runs the ropes a little and blindsides Misawa who is standing on the apron with a PHATASS kick to the head. Welcome to the The World's Most Stoic Lucha Libre beginning that REALLY sets this baby apart and makes this the best tag match of the decade. It doesn't really stray too far from this pretty Un-All Japan type story the whole match. It's basically Taue and Kawada being the biggest prick rudos on earth, beating the shit out of the World's Best Technico- Misawa- and his pansy, cry-baby sidekick Kobashi. Kobashi breaks into tears a few times, and really gets super-melodramatic by trying to sacrifice his body by covering up Misawa's corpse after Kawada and Taue start REALLY doing a number on Misawa. This super-intensified Kobashi As Pansy Boy Fauntleroy stuff works perfectly in the context of the match because Taue and Kawada bludgeon his bad leg beyond recognition, so he has an actual reason to get all fired up- because he being unable to move is the reason that they can beat the shit out of Misawa. This is great because Kawada and Taue will go to any means neccassary to win and Misawa and Kobashi are caught off-guard by this, especially the stunned Kobashi, who is the pivotal point of the psychology. Kobashi isn't ready for such an AMAZINGLY physical match and thus ends up basically offering up Misawa as the sacrificail lamb. This makes Misawa look stronger than ever because he is actually taking on both men at once, with Kobashi limping in to make the save after Misawa is murderlized sufficently. The ending is SURREAL in its stiffness and psychology. Misawa has just taken an Overhand Nodawa and a Cactus Jack-level Nodawa off the apron to

the floor, and has escaped that by eluding Kawada for a bit, then is caught and powerbombed by Kawada, BUTt is saved by the resurgent Kobashi long enough for Misawa to mount an offense against the illegal man in the ring, Taue. After elbowing Taue out of the ring, Misawa shakes his head to get his senses back and begins steeling himself for an offensive onslaught that is to await Kawada. BUT Kawada- at the very moment Misawa begins to steel himself- hits Misawa WITH THE FATTEST ASS KICK TO THE FACE ON EARTH EVER. This match is just chockfull of everything you love about All Japan BUT it is also chockfull of things that I don't usually expect from All Japan- like the heated and emotional feud that causes Kawada to go past the "athlete vs athlete in an athletic contest" psychology that usually is the way these things go. The difference is what makes this the best as much as the strengths of All Japan that makes this the best. As for Match of The Decade, I gotta go with Kawada vs Misawa 1994. But this DEEPLY right up there.

Postmatch- After winning the belts and FINALLY pinning Misawa, Kawada and Taue give an interview with the intensity level of the World Series Losing Manager discussing how his boys tried hard and they have lots to build on for the future and how that pinch hit in the sixth inning really did them in. THESE ARE THE TWO COOLEST WRESTLERS ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

After the interview they have footage of the key moves of the match in slow motion (on the COMM TAPE) and right there is proof that All Japan is the most hellish style in Pro Wrestling. Misawa leaning into the last kick and the mega hit he takes is a FREAKIN Triumph of the WILL. Absolutely CHOICE.

-Dean

%^%^%^%^ AJW Champions Night in Sapporo 6/22/96

So Dean has in excess of 40 tapes sitting in his living room unwatched, with more coming in every day. Dean doesn't particularly care for AJW- not that he doesn't love it and all but he would just rather be watching WAR. So he decides to go ahead and outsource some of his tapes to me, because- hey! I used to write a funny little column in college and I'm temping now so I can type up ramblins about wrestling and it looks like I'm hard at work and by the time the fools at my temp job find out I'll be wasting time at some other office. And- hey! I kind of like AJW, it's the best wrestling in the world and all (behind MPRO, NJ Juniors, WCW PPV undercards, GAEA, JWP, Big Japan death matches with Yamakawa, and any time TAKA is on RAW). So Dean delivers a tape that includes two AJW shows, one the first part of the Discover New Heroines which I've seen and he's already reviewed and has Shark Tsuchiya on it, and the Champions Night in Sapporo which is the worst AJW card I've ever seen and has two freaking Reggie Bennett matches, for the love of Jehovah.

Tomoko Watanabe v. Kaoru Ito

This is pre U*TOPS so Watanabe is still deeply into fringe. Dean has been yammering about a Watanabe resurgence but this match must pre-date that because she is very mediocre in this one. Ito breaks out some early butt-butts in an Ode To Iceman King Parsons and then hits a dope Kanemoto- style spinning senton, she also busts out a nice old school tope that would do Villano IV proud. Watanabe's offense is all about hitting her diving Thez presses which look really weak because she always lands on her feet before putting her weight on her opponent. Watanabe is trying to work on the leg which she does with a couple of the best dragon screws I have ever seen, but those two dragon screws and a couple of judo throws are her sole contribution to the coolness of this match. Ito hits three nasty looking top rope double stomps and a second rope fishermans buster to get the duke. Okay, but nothing to write home about.

Reggie Bennett v. Mariko Yoshida

Yoshida has no feather with her pillbox hat. This match is exactly like a "White Lightning" Tim Horner v. One Man Gang match from UWF, (with Yoshida being faster then Horner and Bennett being fatter then the Gang). Basically, Yoshida throws alot of dropkicks and rollups and stuff to attempt to pin the corpulent Bennett- which Bennett intermittently sells before hitting the avalanche and the second rope splash (Gang used to do it from the top!). Yoshida tries and stuff- hitting a nice running-up-the- ropes plancha, but she is real nondescript and mediocre and she can't pull anything worthwhile out of the gelatinous Bennett.

Chaparita ASARI v. Rie Tamada

Lightweight title match. Tamada is good now, according to Dean, but was all about dropkicks at this point in her career. ASARI does all her spots, kind of blowing a couple, but the degree of difficulty is high, and I would rather see a partially flubbed Skytwister Press then the most technically perfect atomic drop. ASARI is the real deal and I hope she migrates to GAEA when the whole women's scene sorts itself out because her v. Nagashima would be the bomb.

Reggie Bennett v. Kaoru Ito

Hey, hey! Bennett's back, this is evidently the final in a tourney for some AJW belt, but all that really means is that I have to see Bennett's fat ass again. Ito again shows her agility- which I hadn't noticed before this tape- by hitting a nice headscissors reversal and hurricanrana reversal out of a powerbomb. Bennett looks exactly like a matron in a 70's women in prison exploitation flick. Ito hits her top rope double stomp, landing directly on Bennett's nether regions, giving the match a bizarre lesbian psychosexual subtext that makes me feel vaguely sick if I think about it too long. Bennett really blows a superplex and then pins Ito with a powerbomb, which really pissed me off, cause Ito worked her ass off and deserved better then to job to the Fred Ottoman of women's wrestling.

Kyoko Inoue + Takako Inoue v. Manami Toyota + Mimi Shimoda

Hey this is going to be good right?!? Heck, Manami Toyota is the best worker in the history of everything and Kyoko's good and Shimoda a god and Takako is really hot; I know everything else on this tape has been LLPWesque but this match will make it all worth while, right? RIGHT?!? Kyoko and Takako are wearing matching Leather pants jumpsuits which looks great on Takako and not so flattering on the portly Kyoko. Hey, a couple minutes into the first fall Kyoko did a giant swing! ALLL RIGHT! A giant swing! Look at her swing around there, she sure is swinging her, that KICKS ASS. Hey, look! Manami Sabuyota just blew a spring board swan dive, look Kyoko is clapping and swinging her cellulitey ass , Devonami Stormota just flubbed a springboard roll up but still got the pin- SHE IS THE BEST IN THE WORLD, BABY! TAKE THAT TO THE BANK! The second fall opens up with Manami Toyota breaking out her rolling cradle. Hey! look at her roll Takako around. Boy, are they rolling. That's just devastating- being rolled like that. After the debacle that is the rolling cradle, the match got kind of good for a second, cause Takako and Kyoko beat the shit out of Manami and Hey! she can take a beating, I'll give her that. For a couple of minutes the match is real beautiful as Takako and Mimi slap each other and Takako flips off the crowd and I get a funny feeling, but then Kyoko comes in and kills my arousal, but she unleashes a nasty german suplex, and I start to think this might actually turn into something. But then here comes Chadami Austinota with an attempt at a springboard somersault in which she falls off the ropes and has to run back and try it again while the Inoues just stand around. A bunch of real sloppy Manami suplexes on Kyoko (she's a wide load, ladies and gents) and the match and the tape comes to an end. This match was probably the best on the card, but the stuff I hate (Giant Swing, Rolling Cradle, Kyoko shaking her money maker, Manami's sloppiness) totally outweighed the good stuff in the match (Takako v. Shimoda in minky bitch catfight, Kyoko's german suplex, some other stuff). Don't bother.

-Phil

MICHINOKU PRO 7/97 SAMURAI! TV

Great Sasuke vs Funaki: This was pretty good for some offbeat reasons. There are no highspots and it stays on the mat. Funaki is like...oh, I dunno... ninth best mat wrestler in BattlARTS, so it isn't like Sasuke is gonna smoked on the mat here. Funaki shows a bizarro tendency to start a lucha roll-up but convert it into a quasi-shootstyle submission- which you gotta love. Good little match and an okay change of pace from the usual highspot shenanigans one gets with Sasuke. Not that I ever want to see them get into this habit. One BattlARTS is just fine. And Sasuke ain't gonna be able to hang with Minoru Tanaka on the mat or anything.

Shinzaki vs Yone Genjin: Kinda tries to be a good match but Whatyaknow! it's Yone Genjin. It's kinda funny when he hides from Shinzaki in the crowd, but not something you'd wanna see again. Shinzaki whips out a swank camel clutch variation. I am not as repelled by Shinzaki in this match as I usually am. THERE YOU HAVE IT.

MEN'S TEIOH vs Hoshikawa: Hoshikawa is becoming my fave guy in Michinoku Pro and I wouldn't be surprised if he winds up in the New Japan Jr ranks when MP finally succumbs. This match is a little too sloppy to be great but it's a got enough cool things in it to keep me

entertained. MEN'S coming out to STAYING ALIVE and wearing the world's Mackinest dinner jacket had me WOWWED from the get-go. Hoshikawa is all stiff and suplexes like a mofo. MEN'S TEIOH was still in his little mid-year slump and botches a couple of things but not enough to ruin this. Not the best, not the worst, which for Michinoku Pro means you WANT ALL THIS.

-Dean

^&^&^&^& JWP THUNDERQUEEN CARD 7/31/93

Dean [actually QUEBRADA (which you should read because it fuckin RULES) BOY Lorefice] definitely delivered the goods with this tape- two great matches, one being one of the greatest women's matches I have ever seen. Almost got the taste of that AJW show out of my mouth.

Plum Mariko v. Yumiko Hotta

This was the first Plum Mariko singles match I have seen, and my undying love for Yumiko Hotta is well known, so I was real excited for this match. The match had a pretty simple script- with Plum going for her quick submissions and Hotta kicking the hell out of her. Mariko's style of flash submissions was really unique and interesting to watch, and I hadn't seen any Hotta for a while, and watching her beat the hell out of Plum was like falling in love all over again. The end was real great with Plum going for a rolling kneebar and Hotta countering with two horrid kicks to the face and then a real painful looking pyramid driver for the win. Plum was really something special and her versus Meiko Satamura would have been world-beating. Her death was a real tragedy.

Aja Kong, Kyoko Inoue, Sakie Hasegawa, Takako Inoue v. Dynamite Kansai, Hikari Fukaoka, Cutie Suzuki and Mayumi Ozaki

I have watched a bunch of real long matches (45 minutes+) and I think the best way to pull one off is to have a bunch of wrestlers involved (i.e. EMLL Cibernetico, MPRO 10/10 10 man ect.). No matter what kind of shape they are in, a wrestler is going to blow up after wrestling for 60 minutes. In matches like this, they can tag out instead of relying on restholds (Micheals v. Hart) and long periods of lying on the mat (any AJ 60:00 draw). This match was AJW v. JWP and there was all sorts of organizational pride on the line. The rules were very Lucha-like in their incomprehensibility- with it either being "first team to three falls" wins or "most falls in an hour" wins. Also the match started as a singles match between Sakie and Hikari and then turned into a tag match but HELL! the rules didn't matter- you just have to watch and enjoy. This match was part of the killer Aja v. Kansai feud and that was the main storyline, as both women would just beat the hell out of whoever was in the ring while eyeing each other, and when they got in the ring against each other it was just electric; Kansai and Aja are two of the greatest workers in wrestling history period and two of my favorite women wrestlers. Everyone in this match was great- even the usually mediocre Cutie stepped it up, taking a real beating from Aja- including a cradle piledriver and several nasty spinning tombstones from Takako. Kyoko was also great- as

this was before she started frequenting the buffet line and was still really fast and agile. Her reverse rolling gori special was neat and something I hadn't seen before. At about the 35 minute mark, Ozaki hits her Liger Bomb and goes for the pin on Kyoko. Aja comes in and kicks Ozaki in the back of the head to break the pin, driving Ozaki's forehead into Kyoko's. This opens up a nasty gash over Kyoko's eye and swells Ozaki's left eye almost shut. The great thing about this was: instead of letting that kill the match, they adapted it to the storyline, with each women becoming the target of the other teams offense because they were hurt. Also, both women show incredible guts as they wrestle through two nasty injuries and take a big fat beating as well. This made me love Ozaki even more and almost made me feel bad about all those Kyoko fat jokes. I don't want to talk about the falls because they are either real dramatic or surprises, and I don't want to ruin them. Everyone who likes wrestling should get themselves a copy of this match- stiff, technically brilliant, well booked, dramatic- as good as it gets (except for the giant swing and the rolling cradle which both made an appearance, but, fuck, this match lasted an hour- I can forgive that). As many stars as there are grains of sand in all beaches in the world.

-Phil

@#@#@#@#@#@#@ SINGLES GOING STEADY #2! @#@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@

#1 WITH A BULLETT- from the truly psychotically erratic WAR promotion (courtesy of Lorefice the Quebrada Boy! WOO-HOO!)- Lance Storm vs Masaaki Mochizuki [Bukoh Dojo] 6/97: Mochizuki is truly King-Sized these days despite STILL never winning a match but still hitting all of his high-flying/Judo hybrid moves and Lance Storm is SO AMAZINGLY underrated and super-dynamic that this baby flies out of the shoots, hits the ground running and doesn't stop till the shouting is over. Or something. This is chockfull of highflying moves to amaze and astound, as WAR deals with UD and Jericho leaving the promotion and these boys picking up the slack. Lance is fureekin DYNAMIC and springboardy and cold and technical- so of course I dig him the most- sort of like a nerdy math guy you went to elementary school with but who went to the Hart Dungeon instead of Stanford.

HOLDING STEADY AT #2- From the Cream of the Clash tapes that keep making the rounds these days (HESH!!)- Barry Windham vs 2 COLD Scorpio. Clash XXIII. 6/17/93: I'm just guessing here, but I'm thinking that this is Scorpio's FIRST great Match and Windham's LAST great match. Windham takes his last shot at greatness by showing one last time why HE was the great lost wrestler of the '80s (thank you, sweet drugs). This is psychologically sound, the moves are funtabulous, it's highspotless but you don't even notice. A GREAT GREAT match. This the match that Scorpio used as a model in his four great matches in ECW, because it tells the same story and has the same manic, steady, awesome build. I was digging this the most.

MOVING UP THE CHARTS TO #3- A TOTALLY ASS-KICKING DeathSpotFest by two such ultra-bizarro wrestlers that could ONLY occur in the Wildly Beautiful and then Hideously Repulsive WAR promotion- (Ditto Lorefice!) Yuuji Yasuraoka vs Masao Orihara 7/97: Orihara is about as erratic as a wrestler can possibly be- pint-sized no-selling RW Hawk wannabe one minute, Super-seedy mysterious indie Ass-Stomper the next- luckily, he's the latter in this baby

and IT IS BOSS! Yuuji is so good when he wants to be and this is when he wants to be. There are some spine-destroying spots in this match and you REALLY need to see this puppy. Orihara comes off looking like a great wrestler with some hideous secret that keeps him from wrestling in the big leagues, which just adds to the mystery of it all. Yuuji does his quasi-UD springboard stuff, sells like a mutha, and whips out some ass-stomping spots of his own. This match freakin RULES.

DEBUTING AT #4- From the Fabulous GLENN! the Crush Gals vs Jumping Bomb Angels (Itsuki Yamzaki & Noriyo Tatenos) 3/20/86: Since I'm gonna be watching all 30 hours of the 1980's AJW that Loreface got a hold of and sent and thus I will be yammering incessantly about most of this soon enough, I'm gonna- pansylike- gloss over this Best Of tape- which has CHOICE clips of the whole Chigusa/Dump Matsumoto feud including the superPSYCHOTIC Oil Barrel match with Chigusa and Bull Nakano. Great Singing at the end also. This match is the least clipped and the best of the tape. I'm thinking that Lioness Asuka was the major league worker of the two and that Chigusa was the one who was also a great worker but just was a more sympathetic character when being carved up by Dump. The Jumping Bomb Angels are as fabulous as ever and I'm stoked about immersing myself in this barbaric, beautiful, AJW-Stars-singing-disco-dance-hit drenched era of Women's pro wrestling. Full details next week.

Rounding out the Field at #5!!- From the wacky and wild WAR Promotion- Kouki Kitahara/ Nobukazu Araya/ Lance Storm vs Kouji Kitao/ Nobukazu Hirai/ Tommy Dreamer 7/97: Kitahara has the best first name of anybody in wrestling- Kouki! WOO-HOO! (I do the "lend me your comb joke" and only me and fellow codger Jeff Amdur will laugh.) Kitahara is the best low-rent approximation of Hashimoto and he's my fave of the WAR heavies (YEP!). Hirai has fire on (and maybe in) his pants and is really okay when being beaten to death by Lance Storm. Kitoa only stinks up the proceedings for a few seconds, so this was pretty good. Araya is somebody's nephew or something. Tommy Dreamer is TRULY pathetic in this and that is while being compared to non-too-swift company he's in with.

THE HIDEOUS CUT-OUT BIN! #####

#1>>Nikita Kholoff/Ricky Steamboat vs Joe and Dean Malenko-GOD! This was in that Best of the Clash tapes and BOY! this wasn't good. Nikita Kholoff was so NOT good. Watch the crappy Nikita no-sell a Dean Malenko Suplex! See as the least of all the "Russian" Wrestlers hits a Luger-level panty-waist clothesline! Be amazed at the technically perfect Malenko Brothers look to the Dragon for someone to actually work in this match and they come up with an empty sack! Worst Malenkos and worst Steamboat match I can remember, all because of Comrade Steroidski. YIKES!

#2>>Osamu Tachihikari vs BattleRanger- This is from the otherside, the dark, hoary side of the WAR promotion. Battle Ranger is a good little quasi-lucha flyer. Tachihikari is the most lumbering of the faceless lumbering WAR heavyweights. Add it all up and you get a WAR

heavyweight match without the other lumbering heavyweight, replaced instead by a little guy who can work selling for a clumsy galoot who doesn't sell. BOY! This ain't good.

#3>>Kouki Kitahara/ Atsushi Kikuchi vs Abdullah the Butcher/ Koji Kitoa: Kitahara, realizing that there will be no wrestling involved in this match by gandering across the ring, at least forces Abdullah the Oldest Guy In The Ring Ever to do a monkey flip as a sort of "fuck you" to Tenryu for the making him waste time in this debacle. Unbelievably bad. A MUST SEE.

NEXT WEEK: 1980's ALL JAPAN WOMEN and TONS OF IT! LUCHA LUCHA LUCHA! NEW JAPAN! ALL JAPAN! JWP! You Name it, We'll probably watch it this week! WHOMP ASS!

NANIWA~!

Dean Rasmussen, Juventudiac.